AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-45 (Canceled).

46.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for providing electronic communications messaging services, comprising:

      storing data about a plurality of customers of an electronic communications messaging service provider;

      associating a respective state variable with each of the customers;

      automatically updating the respective state variable with one of a plurality of predefined first states, in response to applying a selected one of a plurality of predefined rules to analyze some of the stored data, wherein the rules are defined in part by the provider,

      wherein the selected rule is applied to those customers whose respective state variable has a first predefined value which indicates that those customers are subscribing to only free services of the provider, and the selected rule, once applied, transitions the respective state variable to a second predefined value which indicates the customer is ready for paying services; and

      automatically determining whether or not an email message that promotes a paying service of the ~~subscriber~~ provider is to be a) sent to each of the customers, and/or b) personalized, based on the respective state variable of the customer.

47.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 46 wherein the respective state variable is automatically transitioned from one value to another, as time passes and data about the customer's usage of the services offered by the provider continues to be collected, in response to applying one of the rules to analyze some of the stored data.

48.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47 wherein some of the stored data includes data that has been derived from online communications between each of the customers and the provider.

49.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for providing electronic communications messaging services, comprising:

storing data about a plurality of customers of an electronic communications messaging service provider;

associating a respective state variable with each of the customers;

automatically updating the respective state variable with one of a plurality of predefined first states, in response to applying a selected one of a plurality of predefined rules to analyze some of the stored data, wherein the rules are defined in part by the provider,

wherein the plurality of predefined first states includes the following three states, 1) a customer who is less than a predetermined period of time old, 2) a customer who is at least a predetermined period of time old and has used a service of the provider, and 3) a customer who is at least a predetermined period of time old and has not used the service; and

automatically determining whether or not an email message that promotes a paying service of the ~~subscriber~~ provider is to be a) sent to each of the customers, and/or b) personalized, based on the respective state variable of the customer.

50.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49 wherein the respective state variable is automatically transitioned from one value to another, as time passes and data about the customer's usage of the services offered by the provider continues to be collected, in response to applying one of the rules to analyze some of the stored data.

51.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49 wherein some of the stored data includes data that has been derived from online communications between each of the customers and the provider.

52.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for providing electronic communications messaging services, comprising:

storing data about a plurality of customers of an electronic communications messaging service provider;

associating a respective state variable with each of the customers;

automatically updating the respective state variable with one of a plurality of predefined first states, in response to applying a selected one of a plurality of

predefined rules to analyze some of the stored data, wherein the rules are defined in part by the provider,

wherein the plurality of predefined first states includes the following three states, 1) new customer status, 2) whether a new customer has not used a service within a predetermined period of time, and whether a new customer is likely to subscribe to certain additional services; and

automatically determining whether or not an email message that promotes a paying service of the ~~subscriber~~ provider is to be a) sent to each of the customers, and/or b) personalized, based on the respective state variable of the customer.

53.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 52 wherein the respective state variable is automatically transitioned from one value to another, as time passes and data about the customer's usage of the services offered by the provider continues to be collected, in response to applying one of the rules to analyze some of the stored data.

54.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 53 wherein some of the stored data includes data that has been derived from online communications between each of the customers and the provider.